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ABSTRACT

The Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention Grant Program funds school districts with high percentages of low-income students and school dropouts to enable them to implement dropout prevention initiatives in grades 7 through 12. The emphasis in funding is on long-term school change in school policy, curriculum, governance, scheduling, programming, support services, parent involvement, and collaboration. In fiscal year (FY) 1988, the Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention Grant Program funded 42 programs for 5,919 students in 40 districts statewide for a total of $2.3 million. This final report on program activities for FY 1988 is divided into the following sections: (1) who is being served (program demographics); (2) program accomplishments; (3) program impact; (4) obstacles to success; (5) program improvement; and (6) conclusion. Overall, 5,919 students received services of some kind from dropout prevention grant activities in 1988. Of these, 72.8% were carryover students from the preceding year. White students made up 76.6% of program students, but Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian American students also benefitted. The annual dropout rate of 6.4% of program students contrasted favorably with the 9.8% dropout rate from the entire student population in the districts served. School reorganization, increased parent involvement, and staff development were other benefits made possible by grants under the Chapter 188 program. (SLD)

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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CHAPTER 188 ESSENTIAL SKILLS DROPOUT PREVENTION GRANT PROGRAM

FY 1988 FINAL REPORT

Prepared by the
Office of Student Services
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INTRODUCTION

Fred, a 7th grade student, had been retained in grade twice during his school career and was again doing poorly in school. After the first marking period, he was provided with a possibility of being promoted to grade eight at mid-year if he agreed by contract to attend school, complete homework assignments and participate in a Basic Skills Program. With the help and support of school staff, he accomplished these tasks and on June 22 he was graduated to grade nine.

Last year, Joanne felt lost in a big school that seemed impersonal. This year, the school has been broken down into three clusters, each with a teacher team assigned to it. Joanne has more time to get to know her teachers, there are lots of cluster activities to build a sense of belonging, and the curriculum is much more interesting.

Last year, Maria was hardly ever in school, and when she was, she often got into trouble. This year, she was selected into a program where she went on an Outward Bound weekend, and now goes on Saturdays to a university campus to participate in enrichment, computer and remedial activities. The days are so new and exciting that she has decided that school is not so bad after all.

Bruce, a 16-year old freshman, failed most of his academic subjects the first term and had been absent 20 times by mid-December. His name was presented to the Student Review Team. The team immediately recommended a home assessment be conducted by the school clinical social worker. Having interviewed Bruce and his mother, it was determined that this single parent family was economically depressed and Bruce's psycho-social history revealed him to be suffering severe separation anxiety when away from his mother. Bruce immediately began weekly sessions with the social worker and also participated in the experimental activities group for the remainder of the year. Information was also given to his mother regarding local, state and federal economic assistance. By June, Bruce had only missed four additional days (including just one day when his house burnt down) and had passed every subject for the academic year. The school's Academic Review Board waived most of the time Bruce had owed to meet this year's promotional requirements.

Mary, a sophomore, is 18 years old. She comes from a single parent family where both parents are active alcoholics. She has been retained in grade three times. She has been an angry, acting-out student. She was suspended for alcohol use early in the school year. She has been a high risk for suicide. She is currently seeing an outside-of-school counselor, and with the cooperation and full involvement of the student coordinator, a school teacher, and a support group, she is learning to cope with her life. This school year, Mary has been nominated and elected

student of the month by the faculty, as well as having a drawing and poem selected for honorable mention in the student newspaper. She has also been willing to help other students deal with their difficulties. She attends Al-Ateen meetings and talks with her peers about drugs and alcohol use. This year she attended the Dropout Prevention Advisory Council and also the Community Advisory Council Against Drugs meetings. Mary is doing much better academically, and she has switched her program of studies from a general course to a college program. Her goal is to graduate from college with a major in English/Psychology and become a teacher/counselor.

These are but five short descriptions in a long list of success stories that have resulted from the Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention Grant Program. This grant program funds school districts with high percentages of low-income students and school dropouts to implement dropout prevention initiatives in grades seven through twelve. The emphasis of program funding is upon long-term school change in the areas of school policy, curriculum, governance, scheduling, programming, support services, parent involvement, and collaboration in order to make schools more responsive learning environments for all students, especially those at risk of dropping out of school prior to high school graduation.

In FY 1988, the Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention Grant Program funded forty-two programs in forty school districts state-wide for a total of $2.3 million. What follows is the final report of program activities for the year. The report is divided into six sections: Who's Being Served, Program Accomplishments, Program Impact, Obstacles to Success, Program Improvement, and Conclusion. For further information on the Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention Grant Program, please contact Dan French, Dropout Prevention Specialist, at (617) 770-7589 or George S. Perry, Jr., Director of the Office of Student Services, at (617) 770-7588.

I. WHO'S BEING SERVED: PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHICS

A. Program Students

Overall, 5,919 students received services of some kind from dropout prevention grant activities in FY 1988. Of this number, 4,312 or 72.8% are students who participated in grant activities for the first time, while 1,607, or 27.2% were carry-over students from last year's grants. Following is a set of tables, delineating the breakdown of the total number of students by race, gender, grade, and school program:

Table 1: Breakdown by Race

Race	# Program Students	% Program Students
White	4,535	76.6
Black	586	9.9
Hispanic	645	10.9
Native American Indian	13	0.2
Asian	140	2.4
Total	5,919	100.0

Of interesting note is the fact that 112 out of the 140 Asian students, or 80%, were Vietnamese, Cambodian, or Laotian (while sixteen were Chinese, seven were Thai, and five were Indian). This newer immigrant population generally emigrates from more dire social, economic and political conditions than do immigrants from other Southeast Asian countries. As well, 180 or 4% of the white population was Portuguese, and 59 or 10% of the Black population was Haitian.

Table 2: Breakdown by Gender

Gender	# Program Students	% Program Students
Male	3,237	54.7
Female	2,682	45.3
Total	5,919	100.0

Table 3: Breakdown by Grade

Grade	# Program Students	% Program Students
7	1,469	24.8
8	1,591	26.9
9	1,750	29.6
10	532	9.0
11	329	5.6
12	248	4.1
Total	5,919	100.0

Fifty-two percent of the total number of students served were in grades seven and eight, while 81.3% were in grades seven through nine, reflecting an increased awareness of, and positive trend towards, prevention efforts in earlier grades.

Table 4: Breakdown by School Programs

School Program	# Program Students	% Program Students
Regular Education	3,840	65
Special Education	947	16
Bilingual Education	224	4
Occupational Education	908	15
Total	5,919	100.0

Three hundred and eight or 8% of the total number of regular education students were limited English proficient.

2,265 students or 38.3% were identified as low income (either receiving free or reduced school lunches or their families receiving AFDC).

Many programs also noted that a significant number of program students came from single-parent families. For example, in one program twenty of the thirty program students came from single parent-families.

B. School Staff and Parents

1,617 school staff were served by grant funds, either through staff development or actual participation in program activities. Of this number, the vast majority, 1,486 or 91.9%, were teachers or counselors, while the remaining 131 were administrators. Staff development activities included in-service seminars, common planning time, visitation of other programs, and summer seminars. As well, 1,177 parents benefitted from the grant through home visits, parent newsletters, parent support and topical groups, and parent conferences.

C. Withdrawals

There were 616 students who withdrew from program activities, or 10.4% of the total population. Of this total, 104 students moved to another town or were placed elsewhere because of a change in special education or Department of Youth Services Status. Three hundred forty-four students returned to the regular education program. Of these, 62% completed program activities, nine percent were required to leave the program (because of disciplinary offenses), and 29% left because of disenchantment with program activities.

The remaining two hundred seventy-three students dropped out of school. The annual dropout rate for all high school programs was 6.4%, which was significantly less than the 9.8% average annual dropout rate for the entire student population within districts served. This figure represents the drawing power of providing students with a more responsive learning environment, caring staff and additional support services.

Of the withdrawals, 57.6% were male and 42.4% were female; 71.3% were White, 12.5% were Black, 14.3% were Hispanic, and 1.8% were Asian; 4.3% were regular education limited English proficient; and 40.3% were low-income. The withdrawal rates for males and females, low-income students, and Asians all parallelled their percentages of enrollment within programs. The withdrawal rates for Black and Hispanic students was one and one-half times the withdrawal rate of White students. It should be noted, however, that these disparities of rates by race is less disproportionate than statewide annual dropout rates by race.

The most frequently cited reason for students dropping out of school was family pressure and problems (24.0% of the total), followed by academic problems (e.g., failure, non-promotion) at 20.8% of the total, discipline problems (16.1% of the total), and dissatisfaction with school (15.3% of the total).

II. PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the past year, Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention programs incorporated many basic tenets of current research on effective dropout prevention initiatives - clustering into smaller learning environments, case management and the provision of additional support services, personalized and varied teaching practices, enrichment learning, vocational components, staff development as a vehicle for change, increased parental involvement, and community and business linkages and collaboration.

A. Programs and Services

- All but one program offered multiple services to students. Usually, these services encompassed small group instruction, counseling and tutorial services, career education, and parent involvement activities.

- Fifty-eight percent of funded programs utilized a cluster program concept as a means of creating smaller school programs that provided smaller classes, reduced teacher-student ratios, personalized instruction and fostered a more supportive learning environment. All but two of these programs were integrated within a regular education school building, reducing potential isolation of program students and allowing program students access to regular education offerings. It is especially encouraging that three of these programs encompassed entire grade spans, recognizing recent literature that suggests that smaller school programs improve the quality of education for all students. All three of these programs focused upon reorganizing grades seven and eight into a middle school developmental model of school organization.

- Ninety percent of programs provided services to at-risk students in grades seven through ten, thus recognizing that true prevention efforts need to take place in the earlier grades. Eight percent of the programs served pregnant and parenting teens (which target an older population).

- The vast majority of programs provided extensive support services, as evidenced by seventy percent providing case management services, ninety percent providing tutorial services, and ninety-three percent providing counseling services. An encouraging trend is that one quarter of all programs developed individual learning contracts with program students. Examples of innovative support services included breakfast and lunch clubs, computer-assisted instruction, counseling groups for students with similar problems (e.g., chronic truants), and mentor programs.

- Twenty percent of all programs developed orientation and transition programs for incoming freshmen, responding to research which targets the ninth grade as a difficult transition time for many students due to moving to a more impersonal, departmentalized school and because of the turbulence of the social, emotional and physical developmental changes of that age period. These programs included counseling groups, buddy systems, visits by student alumni now attending high school, and day-long orientation sessions.

- The majority of programs integrated varied learning approaches into the academic program through interdisciplinary curriculum, enrichment learning and innovative teaching practices. Almost one quarter of all programs legitimated the emotional and social development of students by infusing life-issues discussion courses into the curriculum. One example was a mandatory life issues class that met twice weekly for all freshmen, including special education and bilingual students, and focused upon such issues as drug and alcohol education, family life education, school issues, and future life options.

- The majority of programs integrated career education components into the academic program. Over half of all programs integrated some type of work experience component into the school day, recognizing the need to provide practical applications to the curriculum. One junior high program implemented an apprenticeship program in which all eighth graders had a ten-week volunteer placement at a community agency, hospital, or business of interest. In another program, a community service program called Reading to Tots had students reading to children in day care centers.

- Almost one quarter of all programs recognized the vacuum of services and work opportunities for at-risk students during the summer months, weekends and vacations by establishing summer or Saturday work or academic enrichment programs. In one program, students attended a Saturday enrichment program on a university campus, designed to raise achievement levels and attitudes towards school.

- Almost one quarter of all programs offered peer counseling or tutoring components, thus providing students with cooperative learning experiences.

- Only three programs emphasized school discipline initiatives, which indicates a trend away from a focus on intervention services (which respond to symptomatic behavior of at-risk students), and a positive trend towards a focus on prevention initiatives (which address systemic causes of school dropouts). At the same time, five programs initiated mediation programs to promote positive ways of resolving conflict, as opposed to punitive solutions.

- Three quarters of all programs conducted staff development components. One program conducted an intensive, week-long summer seminar on school reorganization and raising achievement levels. In another program, a specialist from a mental health center conducted thirty sessions with guidance staff on leading counseling groups and casework. Just as importantly, almost thirty percent of all programs encouraged staff collegiality, an integrated curriculum, and on-going in-service education through the provision of common staff planning time.

- The vast majority of programs emphasized increased parent involvement through support groups, conferences, home visits and regular communications, thus building positive home-school connections with parents that generally have had poor communications with the school.

B. Reviewing School Policy

Rigid and inflexible school policies can many times become "push-out" policies for at-risk students. The majority of programs made strides in reviewing and revising school policies that have a negative impact upon at-risk students. Below are several areas of school policy review that schools engaged in. (The number in parentheses reflects the number of programs involved in the specific effort.)

- Revision of Promotion Policies (29)

  Twenty-nine programs were involved in examining and revising current promotion policies, primarily because promotion policies with attendance requirements can have a harmful impact on an at-risk student's staying power in school. Nine of these programs instituted waiver procedures from attendance requirements of their promotion policies, while six districts formed review committees to suggest revisions of current policies. Other promotion policy revisions included the adoption of programs to accelerate gaining credits (2); procedures to intervene earlier in non-attendance cases (4); flexibility in the awarding of credit, including the awarding of credits for alternative experiences, (e.g., community service and work experiences) (4); the adoption of buy-back attendance policies that enable a student to gain back days of non-attendance (1); and the piloting of a competency-based diploma (1). Other policies that are being explored are scheduling appeal hearings for waivers of attendance clauses earlier in the year, and incentive attendance policies.

  What this trend suggests is that schools need to continue to reexamine the impact of academic punishment policies on at-risk students, while searching for more innovative and flexible avenues to promote attendance and academic achievement.

- Revision of Suspension and Discipline Policies (23)

  Twenty-three programs have been reviewing and revising suspension and discipline policies, with the goal of reducing out-of-school suspensions. Eight programs implemented in-school suspension or time-out programs, while six programs formed review committees to recommend revisions of the entire code of conduct. Other policy revisions included giving students the option of community service as an alternative to suspension (2); granting credit for academic work completed during suspensions (2); requesting teachers who refer students to the discipline office to indicate preventive steps that have been taken (1); and the adoption of using suspension only as a last resort (2). One program now refers all truant students to an advisor-advisee program instead of suspending them.

- Implementing Innovative School Practices (12), including transitional support to the ninth grade, flexible scheduling, teaming, and the development of relevant curriculum. One district gave diploma-granting status to six community-based alternative education programs, while another district developed an ungraded program for students entering

high school with little formal education.

- Increased Input into Policy Revision (5). A number of programs influenced schools to increase the input given in the development of school policies. Examples include the granting of authority and autonomy to cluster teams to develop cluster rules and policies, the creation of a bi-weekly discipline review committee, and the granting of formal input into school rules to a student council.

C. Linkages with Community Institutions and Initiatives

Developing linkages with community institutions is an integral part of serving at-risk students as it provides additional services and opportunities to students and staff, while also building public support for the program. A first glance indicates that most programs were quite successful in enhancing their programs through school-community collaborations. Every program developed at least one meaningful link with a community institution. Twenty-five programs established links with more than five community institutions, while fifteen developed links with ten or more institutions. Following are the types of institutions with which collaborations have been developed, and the ensuing services being provided to the program.

Type of Institution	Number of Programs
Community agency	34
Business	27
Non-profit educational organization	22
Higher education institution	19
State agency	19
Municipal agency	19
Hospital or health clinic	13
Another school or alternative program	11
Training and employment agency	10
Courts	8

Services Provided	Number of Programs
Enrichment and leadership activities	32
Career education, employment or community service	32
Counseling, tutoring and testing	30
Life issues education, peer leadership	20
Staff and curriculum development	17
Advocacy and assistance	15
Parent support	12
Case management	10
Resource referrals	10
Alternative education and GED programs	9
Health services	8
Equipment, facilities and program funds	7
Aides	5
Incentives	4

In one district, a local lumber company contributed $20,000 to purchase supplies and materials in the development of interdisciplinary curriculum units. In another school, family mediation, job training, life planning and counseling agencies are given space within the school building to provide on-site services to students. The breadth of institutions that are working collaboratively with school programs, and the range of services provided to staff and students, speaks to the enhanced quality of funded programs as a result of these linkages.

D. Advisory Councils

The advisory councils of all but two programs met at least once this year. Eleven councils meet monthly, while fifteen others met at least three times during the course of the year. Advisory councils have been involved in monitoring program progress, developing linkages with community institutions, garnering publicity and funds for programs, and advising the school district on policy and program development. One advisory council has set up numerous links between the school program and community agencies, thus bringing additional support services into the program; another has helped to launch a public relations awareness campaign in the community to build support for the district's dropout prevention initiatives.

E. Coordination with Commonwealth Futures

Twelve of the funded districts also received Commonwealth Futures funds. The goal of Commonwealth Futures is to provide coordinated interagency funding to local communities to develop and implement comprehensive, community dropout prevention and reentry plans. In FY 1988, the Advisory Council and the Futures Board in the thirteen Futures communities were merged into one body to facilitate coordination between the two initiatives. As well, Chapter 188 program staff continued to work with the Futures initiatives to integrate and consolidate efforts, coordinate resources, and plan jointly.

III. PROGRAM IMPACT

Several areas of school performance indicate that Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention programs have had a demonstrable impact upon students served.

Attendance

Programs averaged 85.4% attendance of all students for the year, as compared to 78.3% last year, a 7.1% increase. Eighty-two percent of the programs demonstrated an overall increase in attendance. Seventy-nine percent of all program students improved their attendance or maintained their attendance as compared to last year. In one program, all 116 students who were targeted for services improved their attendance. In another program, the average attendance for second year program students continued to rise, from 89.4% to 92%. In a program for high risk chronic truants, average attendance rose from 54.6% to 82%. This is especially significant when considering that the student population served within these programs are at risk of dropping out of school.

Suspensions

There were nineteen percent fewer out-of-school suspensions to program students this year than last. Three-quarters of all programs decreased their numbers of out-of-school suspensions, while eighty percent of programs decreased the numbers of students suspended multiple times. As an example, in one school the numbers of out-of-school suspensions were reduced from 54 (in 1986-1987) to 43; multiple suspensions were reduced from 115 to 90; and in-school suspensions from 513 to 322. In another program, the number of suspension days and multiple suspensions were cut in half. Decreases in out-of-school suspensions can be attributable to the creation of more supportive environments for students, an employment of alternative forms of conflict resolution, and students' decrease in inappropriate behavior due to more responsive programs and staff. Correspondingly, the slight increase in in-school suspensions reflects an attempt to handle students with problems within school rather than giving them extended time away from school.

Academic Achievement

Program students also began to show academic gains as a result of their enrollment in more supportive programs. Overall, eighty-five percent of program students increased or maintained the number of passing grades they received. In one program, 27 out of 35 students reduced the number of course failures they received, while another five students maintained the number of passing grades they received. In another program, the numbers of course failures for program students was reduced in successive terms from 56 (1st quarter) to 48 (2nd) to 39 (3rd) and finally to 30 (4th). Seventy-one percent of program students (from reporting districts) scored higher on achievement tests than the previous year. One district surveyed program students on homework, and found that as a result of the program, the percent of students completing at least thirty minutes of homework a night rose from 67% to 91%. In another program, raises in average attendance and academic achievement resulted in all ninety students being promoted to the next grade.

Attitudes Towards School

A number of programs chose to conduct student attitude surveys or tests during the course of the school year. Interestingly enough, the results were consistent between programs. Initial attitudes of students revealed a low self-esteem and a blaming of themselves for their school failures. Students did not see the relationship between hard work and success, and lacked career goals. A significant percentage of students did not like the image of themselves in school.

Survey results revealed, however, that program activities had increased student bonding to school and to program staff. The majority of students had increased their desire to succeed in school. Students reported a raised self-esteem and a more positive attitude towards school. Students attributed these feelings to participating in a program in which there were caring staff, and in which support and extra help were provided.

Retention

Although it is still too early to determine the success rate of these programs, one could predict that raised attendance and academic achievement, and lowered suspensions, will result in fewer students dropping out of school. In fact, some programs have already reported some success. One program reported that all thirty students are still in school and progressing; while another high school program reported that 135 out of 140 students are successfully "making it" in school. These are encouraging results given the population that programs are serving.

IV. PROGRAM OBSTACLES

Programs were asked to list the obstacles they have faced in implementing program initiatives. The following were the most common responses, along with the number of programs citing it as an obstacle.

Lack of adequate resources (20)
Difficulty in scheduling (16)
Difficulty hiring staff (15)
Underdeveloped or underutilized linkages with community institutions (9)
Communication difficulties between program staff and administration (5)
Ineffective advisory council (4)

- Most frequently cited (20 programs) were the cuts in FY 88 funding in what for most programs was their first full year of implementation. For most programs, funding cuts resulted in a lack of adequate staffing, clerical support, materials, supplies, and support services, and for some, in the number of students that could be served. Other programs were faced with inadequate space and limited transportation.

- Fifteen programs had difficulty hiring staff due to cumbersome district hiring processes and quality staff being hard to find, especially part-time staff. This certainly suggests the need for programs to begin the hiring process at the end of the school year rather than in September, and to consolidate staffing to include primarily full-time staff. Other programs cited the need to have a unique process based on factors other than solely seniority for the selection of staff for alternative programs. Still others, cited the difficulty in finding minority staff to present diverse role-models to diverse student bodies.

- Another category of obstacles was rigid school policies and practices as impediments to implementing innovative programs. Over one-quarter of all programs cited the rigidity of the school schedule and the grouping of students as major obstacles to program improvement. Rigid promotion policies also resulted in continuing high rates of non-promotion rates for many programs. For example, in one district, a student survey of eighth graders revealed that 36% reported having been retained in grade at least once during their school years. Such high non-promotion rates continue to be of grave concern, as retaining a student in grade can offset any raises in student attendance, attitudes or achievement, and be a contributing factor to that student dropping out of school.

- At mid-year, one-quarter of the programs cited communication difficulties between program staff and the administration as a major obstacle. Much of this tension resulted from program staff wanting to implement policies and practices that were new to the school (e.g., flexible scheduling, community service) or revise those which were seen to be in conflict with program goals (e.g., rigid and punitive disciplinary policies). This suggested the need for formal channels for conducting healthy discussions within schools about potential school change initiatives that arise out of a program's development. At the end of the school year, however, only five programs reported this tension, possibly pointing to increased communication between program staff and administrators.

- Many advisory councils were viewed as "token bodies," that is, they are mandated bodies that were not given the authority and credibility to benefit programs and influence policy. In other districts, program coordinators and council members do not have the experience of operating such a council, resulting in an ineffective use of council time.

- Underutilized community linkages resulted primarily from lack of adequate staff to pursue developing these linkages.

- Five programs also reported an inability to successfully involve parents of at-risk students in their child's education, suggesting a need for these programs to visit schools that have experienced success in this area.

- One program cited the local union's lack of commitment regarding the implementation of change practices as a major obstacle to fully achieving their goals. Such an issue will increase in magnitude as schools seek to expand programs school-wide, and look to negotiate expanded and redefined roles for school professionals.

V. PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Programs cited various goals for improving and strengthening their programs (the numbers in parentheses indicate the number of programs citing the area as a target for improvement).

- Academic reorganization (23), including heterogeneous grouping, clustering, block and flexible scheduling, cooperative learning, middle schools, and transitional support.

- Increase available support services to at-risk students (14), including counseling, tutoring, case management, peer counseling and mentoring services.

- Expand linkages with community institutions and strengthen the local dropout prevention advisory council (14). Advisory councils should be empowered to have real decision-making input into school policies, curriculum, government and other school practices that impact upon at-risk students. As well, the council should be used to strengthen existing community linkages and develop new ones. Generally, the full range of community agencies, businesses, municipal agencies and higher education institutions should be better utilized.

- Increase parent involvement (12), especially home visits, support and topical parent groups, and regular parent newsletters.

- Improve staff coordination (10), particularly between program staff and the school administration.

- Increase available programming for at-risk students (9), including team-building activities, life skills courses, multicultural curriculum, career education, apprentice programs, programs for repeaters, and summer enrichment programs.

- Increase staff development efforts (8) This included two areas: (a) provide staff with increased autonomy and common planning time to make programmatic decisions; and (b) increase professional development opportunities for all staff around curriculum development and pedagogy in teaching at-risk students.

- Revise rigid and punitive school policies in the areas of attendance, discipline, promotion and graduation (8). Specific attention should be given to developing buy-back attendance provisions, flexible and expanded opportunities for credit earning, credit and grade acceleration, mediation as an alternative conflict resolution process, and incentives and rewards.

- Increase student leadership opportunities (6), including peer education and counseling, strengthening student government, and mentoring.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based upon final reports and Department monitoring efforts, the Chapter 188 Dropout Prevention Grant Program has had a significant impact upon districts. Five thousand nine hundred and nineteen students received services in FY 1988 as a result of locally funded programs. Sixteen hundred school staff benefitted from grant activities and staff development, schools were reorganized to facilitate teaming and learning, parents became more involved in their children's education, and extensive linkages with community institutions were fostered. Increased input into school policies resulted in the revision of school rules and the implementing of innovative school practices, and advisory councils increased community input into the schools. The result has been a marked increase in program students' attendance, academic achievement, and attitudes towards school, and a corresponding decrease in out-of-school suspensions. Cuts in FY 1988 funding and inflexible school policies and practices have inhibited many programs, with the latter underscoring the need for dropout prevention initiatives to be integrated with broad-based school change improvement efforts. This notion is reinforced by improvement goals articulated by most programs that center around creating a more flexible and responsive learning environment for all students.

Hopefully, this trend towards dropout prevention as a school change strategy will continue to have a positive impact upon schools and result in increased retention, achievement and attendance rates for program students.